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JOSE AN N.

CORTINA

BANDIT OR PATRIOT?



TO BE
A CITIZEN
MEANS TO
HAVE EQUAL
RIGHTS AND
EQUAL
OPPORTUNITIES



AN ADDRESS BY

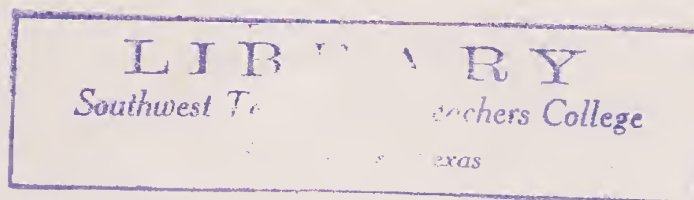
J. T. CANALES

BEFORE THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
AT SAN BENITO, TEXAS - OCTOBER 25, 1951

J O S E T C A N A L E S

*Juan N. Cortina
Presents His Motion
For A New Trial.*

1951



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An Address Delivered by
J. T. CANALES

Before The Lower Rio Grande Valley Historical
Association on October 25, 1951, at San Benito,
Texas.



SPANISH PROVERB:

"La mentira dura mientras la verdad llega".

Translation: "A lie lasts until the truth arrives".



The above is a picture of Juan N. Cortina taken in his uniform of Brigadier General in the Mexican Army, about the year 1864.

Juan N. Cortina
[Signature]



Madam President, Officers and Members of the
Valley Historical Association, Ladies and Gentlemen:-


INTRODUCTION

I appreciate your kind invitation to address you on
this occasion and to permit me to choose this subject:

*"JUAN N. CORTINA PRESENTS HIS MOTION
FOR A NEW TRIAL"*

Being related to Cortina, on my Mother's side,
and having lived in the Rio Grande Valley for almost
fifty (50) years, studying its history and observing its
wonderful development, I have become identified with
the Rio Grande Valley and love its history and traditions.
I trust that I may give you a fair and impartial re-statement
of the case against Juan N. Cortina and I will try to
faithfully reconstruct, for your benefit, the conditions that
prevailed at the time of the incidents, hereinafter mention-
ed, to the end that you will have a better understanding
of the history of the Rio Grande Valley. The basis of my
Address is found in the following bibliography:

1. "A Vaquero of the Brush Country" by J. Frank
Dobie, published in 1929 by the Southwest Press at Dallas,
Texas.

 2. "The Texas Rangers" by Dr. Walter Prescott Webb of the University of Texas, published in 1935 by the Riverside Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

3. "North of Mexico" by Carey McWilliams, published in 1949 by J. B. Lippincot Company, Philadelphia and New York.

✓ 4. A Thesis on "Juan N. Cortina 1824-1892" by Charles W. Golfinch, published in 1950 by Bishop Print Shop, Brownsville, Texas.

✓ 5. "Cortina, the Rogue of the Rio Grande" by Lyman W. Woodman, published in 1950 by the Naylor Company of San Antonio, Texas.

In the above books and in the "Thesis" you will find Cortina referred to as a "bandit" and "a thief"; as "the red robber of the Rio Grande"; as "the black sheep of his Mother's otherwise commendable flock"; as "the scourge of the Lower Rio Grande Valley"; and as "The Rogue of the Rio Grande".

I believe you will agree that epithets, like labels on bottles, are of easy manufacture; but, like labels on bottles they are not necessarily evidence of the true nature and character of the man referred to, nor of the true contents of the bottle. So, as true lovers of history, we must examine carefully, the real character of the man referred to by these epithets in the light of his historical background; and carefully weigh the true facts before we should pass final judgment upon such man.


Whether a man is called a "bandit" or a "hero" often depends just upon one word—SUCCESS; for very often a successful bandit turns out to be a real hero and true patriot, such as our Washington; often an unsuccessful one is condemned as a criminal and hanged, even though, in reality, such person has lived an heroic life. For instance, Robert Emmett, who is now considered a

hero and a patriot in Ireland, was hanged as a bandit by the British Government; and the Rev. Father don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, who was first disgraced, then shot as a bandit by the Spaniards, now lives in the hearts of the Mexican people and throughout North and South America, not only as a hero, but as the father of his Country. Thus we are here reminded of the valuable advice given by Benjamin Franklin at the time of the Declaration of Independence: "Gentlemen, we must hang together or else we will hang separately". They who survive some times are patriots; and those who are hanged are often bandits; but Cortina was not hanged.

Juan N. Cortina's life may be divided into two parts: the first part deals with his life in Texas up to his expulsion, which occurred at the end of the year 1859; and the second with his life in Mexico as substantially related by Lyman W. Woodman in his book, above named. We will here now consider the first part:

* CORTINA'S FAMILY AND BACKGROUND

All the historical authorities agree that Juan N. Cortina, through his Mother, Estefana Goceascochea de Cavazos y de Cortina, was a direct lineal descendant of Blas Maria de la Garza Falcon, military Captain and original settler of the town of Camargo, Mexico; and of don Jose Salvador de la Garza, son-in-law of Blas Maria, also an original settler of Camargo, who was the grantee of the Espiritu Santo Grant, where the City of Brownsville is now located. While he did not possess the education and culture of his brothers and sisters, nevertheless he was a member of a distinguished Spanish family in Mexico. He was born in Camargo, Mexico, on the 16th day of May, 1824. When General Taylor invaded the disputed territory between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande and thus started the War between the United States and Mexico in 1846, Cortina, being of military age and a loyal citizen of Mexico, did his duty to his native Country



by joining the Army of General Arista, the Mexican Commanding General, and probably fought against General Taylor's Army and was present both at the Battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, which were fought at or near Brownsville, Texas. At the conclusion of the War in Texas and before the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, (which took place early in the year 1848) Cortina's Mother and all her family moved from Camargo, Mexico, to live on their lands in the Espiritu Santo Grant, 8 or 9 miles north-west of the City of Brownsville; and, by taking advantage of the provisions of said Treaty (which made all persons of Mexican descent, who resided and owned lands in the disputed territory, American citizens, unless they repudiated such citizenship within one year) the whole family became American citizens. There is no record that any of the Cavazos or Cortina ever formally repudiated their American citizenship; but there is abundant proof that they considered themselves American citizens and acted as such, for Cortina's full brother Jose María Cortina, was elected Tax Assessor of Cameron County and Juan N. Cortina himself, actively participated in the election of County Officers, in Cameron County. His half brother, Sabas Cavazos, my great-grand father, always considered himself an American citizen. It is for this reason that the Mexican Claims Investigation Commission, appointed in 1873 by President Juarez, maintained that Juan N. Cortina was an American citizen and, therefore, the Republic of Mexico was not responsible for any of his acts. Of course said Commission did not take into consideration the fact that after Cortina was run out of Texas at the end of the year 1859 he, again, re-acquired his Mexican citizenship. Cortina, though unlearned, was by nature kind-hearted, aggressive, spirited and brave. He was a natural leader of men. He sympathized with the "under-dog" among his fellow citizens and opposed human slavery, and that is the reason why he became popular with the

common people. In the year 1858, when a band of wild Karankawa Indians raided Cameron County and killed one of his cousins, this "black sheep of his Mother's otherwise commendable flock" (as Dr. Webb calls him) raised and led a posse of cowboys, pursued the Indians and wiped out the last surviving band of Karankawas. Here is shown the true spirit of Cheno Cortina.

THE BRAND OF POLITICS THAT PREVAILED IN CAMERON COUNTY AFTER THE MEXICAN WAR.

Soon after the Mexican War a number of adventurers, prompted by a desire to get rich quick, flocked into the Rio Grande Valley to make their "fortune" at the expense of the newly created American citizens of Mexican descent, who owned lands and property in this section of Texas. Among them were Charles Stillman, Samuel A. Belden, Elisha Basse, Robert H. Hord, the Mussina Brothers, Richard King, Mifflin Kennedy and others. There were two political factions, one called the "blues" who later identified themselves as democrats; and the other the "reds", who later became known as republicans. Charles Stillman, who came here to make "his fortune" by fair or unfair means, and who was very wealthy, was the recognized head of the "reds" and soon had absolute control of both the County and City administrations, ruling them with an iron hand; he established a sort of George B. Parr's pattern of political dictatorship in Cameron County. Those who stood in his way or opposed his financial schemes would be prosecuted, convicted or done away with. In corroboration of this statement, I will here quote from Dr. Webb's excellent book, "The Texas Rangers", at bottom of page 175 and top of page 176:-

"Not only were the Mexicans bamboozled by the political factions, but they were victimized by the law. One law applied to them and another, far less

rigorous, to the political leaders and to the prominent Americans. The Mexicans suffered not only in their persons but in their property. The old landholding Mexican families found their titles in jeopardy and if they did not lose in the courts they lost to their American Lawyers. The humble Mexicans doubted a government that would not protect their person, and the higher classes distrusted one that would not safeguard their property. Here, indeed, was rich soil in which to plant the seed of revolution and a race war. High and low were ready to support a champion of Mexican rights, one who would throw off American domination, redress grievances, and punish their enemies; and just such a champion arose in the person of Juan Nepomuseno Cortinas".

By way of examples allow me to relate some incidents which will give you an idea of what was taking place in Brownsville at the time Cortina lived here, and just before his career of "bandit" started:-

When the Oblate Fathers arrived at Point Isabel December 9, 1849, they were received with open arms by the people there, who were mostly of Mexican origin and immediately they were supplied with all kinds of necessities for their comfort and convenience. The same thing happened later when they arrived in Brownsville. The people were really glad to have them and were generous in their offerings. But when the Holy Fathers saw that the entire City was given to open gambling, houses of ill repute, and saloons, naturally they were shocked to see such things. Not long after their arrival they were diplomatically informed by the agents of the politicians that if they wanted to live well and prosper in their new field they must be expected to keep their eyes, ears and mouths shut. That they must see nothing, hear nothing and say nothing wrong, specially, must not criticize the way the administration was running things in the City and County. To their everlasting honor and good name

they refused to do so. Immediately word was passed by the administration henchmen that no assistance be extended to them. The record shows that soon after this they asked to be recalled as they were sick and nearly starving. The recall took place at Marseilles, France, on September 2, 1850 and it was not until May of 1852, that the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, returned to the Rio Grande Valley. Doesn't this sound like Duval County politics?

Again, here is another example of the high-handed methods used, of the utter disregard for civil rights and of fair dealings. There is reflected on examining the abstract of title to lots in the City of Brownsville, that Charles Stillman did not buy the true title to said lots in the City of Brownsville from the real owners of the land, who were Maria Josefa Cavazos and her husband, although he must have known that they were the real owners. Instead he purchased squatters' titles, known as "labor titles" which were later held void and worthless by our own as well as the Federal Courts. Afterwards when his own lawyers Bassett and Hord advised him that the Cavazos's title was the valid one, he did not buy it but made them (his lawyers) purchase it for a consideration of \$33,000.00 when the appraised value of the City property in 1850 was \$214,000.00 and even his lawyers did not pay in cash, but gave a note which Simon Mussina, Stillman's own partner, said was not paid. For he charged that it was a fake transaction and no money was ever paid for the land. One thing is certain, the Cavazos owners did not get any money. Neither did they later, get any part of the money paid by the United States Government for the land in Fort Brown, which is supposed to have amounted to \$160,000.00. All of this money, through some skullduggery or shenanigans of Charles Stillman, was received by him and kept by him and with this money, thus acquired, he made his famous "fortune". Again, these transactions do remind us of what

has been taking place in our Duval County under a similar political dictatorship. All of this had taken place and was happening in Brownsville when on July 13, 1859, after "Cheno" Cortina had drunk his morning coffee at the Brownsville Market Place, and was riding home, at the corner of 12th Street and Washington, right by the present Manautou's Store, he saw Robert Shears, the City Marshal, unmercifully beating a drunken Mexican, who had been a former servant at Cortina's Ranch. I will let Dr. Webb tell the story: "The unnecessary brutality of the Marshal caused Cortina to remonstrate, mildly enough in the beginning. Shears exasperated at his interference answered with an insult which called for action. Cortina promptly shot the Marshal in the shoulder, took the Mexican behind and galloped out of town in the grand style of an American cowboy or a Mexican Vaquero on a holiday". Dr. Webb continues: "This episode had about it all the dramatic qualities that any rising young bandit—or hero—could desire. Cheno, popular member of the wealthy class, a Mexican, had shot a representative of American law, rescued the humblest member of Mexican society, and carried him boldly away to a safe retreat on his Mother's Santa Rita Ranch".

This started the career of Cortina as a bandit; and he refused to be arrested for he knew that he would be given the same treatment that the enemies of George Parr would expect to receive in Duval County. The result was that several clashes took place and Cortina was successful in putting to rout those who came to arrest him, not only the Sheriff and his posse; but later even some of the Texas Rangers.

THE BROWNSVILLE RAID OF SEPTEMBER 1859

There is no question but that Cortina did take the law into his own hands when he raided Brownsville September 28 and 29, 1859; but he did not rob or steal when he had the City at his mercy—even the affidavit of his sworn

enemy, Adolphus Glavecke, which is copied in full on pages 43 and 44 of Goldfinch's Thesis, does not charge him with doing that. The record shows that he bought and paid for the arms and ammunition he got for his men at Alexander Werbiski's Store, which he would not have done had he been a bandit. As stated by Goldfinch, Cortina maintained throughout, that he had entered Brownsville only to bring retribution to those whose punishment had long been delayed. There is no evidence that any plundering took place. (In Cortina's proclamation, published two days later, he pointed out that certain men in Brownsville had formed a sort of league to persecute and rob those of Mexican origin and that, since the machinery of government was largely in their hands, the Mexicans had finally decided to take matters into their own hands and bring to justice those who had gone unpunished for a long time.) He named four, of the five men killed, as being in that class and regretted that the others had escaped. Subsequent events tend to corroborate his contention for the authorities in Brownsville arrested Tomas Cabrera, a friend of Cortina, and without giving him the benefits of a trial, as the law required, had him lynched. I quote from the Thesis, page 46: "The night after Tobin's Rangers arrived in Brownsville, November 10, 1859, he (Tomas Cabrera) was taken out of jail and hung by 'an unkown and lawless mob'".

It was after Cabrera was lynched that Cortina made his offensive move following his raid on Brownsville, and he defeated the Texas Rangers and had his own way until the federal troops arrived under the able command of Major Heintzelman. Cortina's undisciplined men were no match for trained soldiers and he retreated west toward Rio Grande City and in a pitched battle fought December 14, 1859, he was completely routed and crossed over into Mexico. Thus ends the first chapter of his life.

PART II

CORTINA'S LIFE IN MEXICO FROM 1860 TO HIS DEATH IN 1892

Mr. Lyman W. Woodman in his book: "Cortina, the Rogue of the Rio Grande" relates the acts and doings of Cortina and the services he rendered his native country at its most crucial time in Mexican History. A careful reading of said book, disregarding some of the epithets, makes Cortina, not only a great patriot, but an able general and a diplomatic genius. In support of the first part of my first statement, I quote his language, on page 70:-

"For all his rascally and evil ways, Cortina did retain one commendable trait: he had a deep love for his country and wanted to see it prosper under a fair and peaceful Mexican administration".

Early in 1860 Cortina had joined the forces of General Carbajal, who was his kinsman, in Mexico and there learned military discipline. Soon through sheer ability he came to be an officer and was given command of troops. Cortina was a devout Roman Catholic and at first sympathized with the Conservative Party in Mexico, which was supported by the Roman Catholic Church; but when they were defeated and its leaders: Miramon, Marquez and Mejia, betrayed their Country and called the Archduke Maximillian, to become Emperor of Mexico, he abandoned them entirely and joined President Juarez to defend his Country from the French Forces which were sent by Napoleon III.

Because of his courage and integrity, Cortina won the absolute confidence of President Juarez, whose government was recognized by the U. S. President Buchanan.

Here, again, is shown that Cortina sympathized with the under-dog; and, later on, when he was the

Mexican commanding officer at Matamoros, he showed his sympathy for the union cause and this because of his conviction that human slavery was wrong.

In support of the second part of my statement to the effect that Mr. Woodman's book demonstrates that Cortina was an able general; I will call your attention to the fact that Cortina, when stationed at Matamoros, Mexico, in 1864, outwitted and out-maneuvered three great generals representing three different countries, as follows:--He persuaded the Confederate General Magruder to prevail upon Governor Murrah, the then Confederate Governor of Texas, to address Cortina a letter of immunity which, in part, says:-

"Should your Excellency desire at any time to accept the hospitality of Texas, her protection against molestation in any form will be extended to you, and especially in reference to any former complications in which you have been involved under the laws of this State".

In other words, in this letter Cortina was pardoned for all he had done in Texas.

When Captain-General Mejia, as head of the French Army, arrived at Bagdad to take the port of Matamoros, Cortina did not have any artillery to defend the City; so, Cortina promised to let Mejia enter Matamoros without opposition; but required him to pay and provision all his (Cortina's) own troops; allowed his troops peaceably to withdraw from Matamoros; and, then when Mejia entered Matamoros, Cortina bottled up Mejia and his troops.

I quote from a dispatch sent by General Phillip Sheridan, Commander of the Union troops stationed on the Rio Grande, and quoted in Mr. Woodman's book, on page 94:

"Affairs on the Rio Grande frontier are getting beautifully mixed up. Cortina has driven in Mejia's

pickets. He also captured the steamer 'Señorita'.

Again, in another message, General Sheridan said:

"The French authorities are very much embarrassed. Cortina drives in Mejia's pickets at pleasure, and the arrival of our heavy forces on the Rio Grande and the little irritations which I have encouraged along the river have alarmed them so much that there is a perfect exodus from Matamoros. The French soldiers are deserting and there is a very uneasy state of affairs".

Again, at the bottom of page 94 and top of page 95, General Sheridan says:

"Cortina holds all the roads around Matamoros. He says he could take the place if he had ammunition. He has captured considerable Rebel cotton. As Governor of Tamaulipas under the Liberal Government, he has given permission for our forces to enter Mexico".

Cortina persuaded General Sheridan to write to General Grant for authority to cross the Rio Grande, join his forces with Cortina's and follow the Confederate General Shelby, who had crossed into Mexico, for he wrote to Grant, as follows:-

"I think we ought to go after Shelby and his command. I feel certain that with 6,000 or 8,000 cavalry I can stir up the whole of northern Mexico. The Liberals are suffering for want of ammunition and Matamoros is vital to them on that account".

Here we have an ignorant "bandit", who had risen by sheer native ability to be a Brigadier General, contending with the able representatives of three governments, and outwitting them.

If that doesn't show both his ability as a general, as well as his genius as a diplomat, then I do not understand facts. Mr. Woodman surprises me when he tries to show that Cortina was a rogue and he proves him to be, not only a patriot, but a good soldier and a fine diplomat. In other words, Mr. Woodman had found a real "diamond in the rough"; but he only saw in him a chunk of coal.

If there is a man who knew Juan N. Cortina during this period of time and who could observe the change in the life of Cortina from his alleged "bandit" days, in Texas, to his patriotic services rendered to Mexico, this man was Col. J. S. (Rip) Ford, who himself admits that he did his best to kill Cortina in 1859 and here is what he thought of Cortina about August 10, 1864, when Juan N. Cortina was military commander at Matamoros.

I quote from the unpublished Memoirs of Rip Ford, Volume 3, page 1111 (copy of which is in the possession of The Brownsville Historical Association):-

"In regard to the manner in which Cortina treated citizens of the United States, and of Texas, while he was in power in the State of Tamaulipas, it was worthy of remembrance. There were Americans in Matamoros known to have been personally unfriendly to Cortina, and he treated them kindly and honorably".

In Volume 2, page 785, Colonel Ford, describes Cortina, as follows:-

"He is of medium size, with regular features, and a rather pleasing countenance. He is rather fairer than most men of his nationality. He is fearless, self-possessed, and cunning. In some cases he has acted towards personal and political enemies with a clemency worthy of imitation". With this I conclude my comments of Cortina's life in Mexico.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE REPORT OF THE MEXICAN CLAIMS COMMITTEE APPOINTED IN 1873.

It is well known that there were two important committees appointed to investigate the alleged crimes of cattle stealing: one by the American government and the other by the Mexican government. The Mexican Investigations Committee was composed of very eminent lawyers, appointed by President Juarez about the year 1873 and they came to the Rio Grande Valley, heard witnesses, took testimony and investigated the County records with reference to the bona fides and validity of the American claims for stolen cattle. In some instances they found that persons, who claimed that thousand of cattle were stolen from them, never rendered any cattle for taxes and the Commissioners wondered how the County Assessors could be so careless in omitting from the tax rolls such a large number of personal property. When I came to reside in Brownsville in January, 1904, I was reliably informed that a highly respected and rich merchant, who was then living in Brownsville, don Francisco Yturria, aided by the Kings and Kennedys had purchased all of the printed copies of said report and had them destroyed; the reason given for this, was that said report cast a bad light on the manner in which they had acquired their great wealth. Only one copy escaped such fate and this copy was in the hands of Mr. Paulino Preciado, a publisher of a small Mexican paper, called "EL PORVENIR" in Brownsville, Texas; and he reprinted the Mexican Commission's Report in Spanish and sold several copies, one of which is in my possession. When Charles W. Goldfinch was writing his Thesis I called to his attention this report and he was fortunate in obtaining from his Professor of History, J. Fred Rippey, an English translation, printed by Baker and Godwin in New York, in the year 1875. I think that copies, both in Spanish and in English, can be found in the Congressional Library

in Washington, D.C. This report contains very valuable and material evidence and throws a great deal of light on the conditions that existed in the Rio Grande Valley during the period investigated. For some reason none of the writers, above named, except Mr. Charles W. Goldfinch, ever gave, read or considered this valuable testimony, which is here mentioned in the nature of newly discovered evidence. I will copy several excerpts from the Thesis, by Mr. Goldfinch, to give you an idea of the importance of this newly discovered evidence. On page 59, he says:-

"After the report of the United States commissioners was published, the Mexican government dispatched a commission of its own to the border to investigate the charges against General Cortina. Cortina, himself, was called to Mexico City to make a personal report to Juarez. The Mexican commissioners decided immediately that most of the accusation against Cortina stemmed from the fact that in organizing his irregular troops, the Fieles de Cortina and the Exploradores, he had unfortunately enlisted men who were prone to crime. Although these irregular troops were raised for perfectly legal reasons, and although the commission found no evidence that they had stolen cattle while serving under Cortina, their short term of enlistment and the bad reputation of some of them caused a lot of suspicion to fall on Cortina for enlisting them. A detailed examination of the charges against Cortina convinced the Commissioners that he had not been involved in cattle stealing but had been the victim of a smear campaign conducted by Texans with ulterior motives".

I fully concur with Mr. Goldfinch's conclusions, on page 67, as follows:-

"By using these accusations, published in Congressional documents, as primary sources, a most convincing account of Cortina as a bandit and a cattle thief could be written. Yet the hopelessness of discovering anything approximating the truth about Cortina, by using the source material to be found about him within the American culture pattern, is obvious. This material, if used with caution and with an eye for contradictions, does allow one to obtain some information about Cortina. We begin to get a more balanced picture of Cortina when we examine the primary sources bearing on Cortina that originated in Mexico. Far less of this material is available, and it has been neglected by most historians writing about Cortina. Unless one is willing to discredit the report of the Mexican Commissioners entirely there is little foundation for the charge that Cortina was a prince of cattle thieves in the year 1870 to 1873. In the period just before the imprisonment of Cortina by Diaz, the charges against Cortina were not only self-contradictory but also seemed to have been twisted to make a case against him".

It is my contention that whosoever is writing the life of Cortina should take into consideration this evidence given by the Mexican Commission and that there is no excuse for overlooking or ignoring it as this is the most impartial evidence in the whole record and one which would be given a greater weight by our Courts of Justice in this country.

CONCLUSION

Juan N. Cortina, therefore, claims that he has not been given a fair and impartial trial before the American Tribunal of History: that he has been convicted of the various epithets above mentioned on the prejudiced testimony of his political enemies; that his side, or view point,

in the controversy has not been duly considered, but wholly ignored; and that the only competent and impartial evidence, which is contained in the Report and Findings of the Mexican Claims Commission, has not been taken into consideration in appraising his acts, except by one writer, Mr. Charles W. Goldfinch; that the latter and most important part of his life, which was spent in Mexico, where he rendered valuable and patriotic services to our Neighbor Sister Republic of Mexico, where he became Governor of his Native State of Tamaulipas, successfully opposed the French Invasion, and earned the confidence and approval of the patriot President Juarez, has not been given the proper weight and interpretation that it merits in the eyes of History, and for this reason presents this his motion for a new trial and hopes that some future American historian may arise and write a more just and fair biography of his life, and for all of this he will ever pray.

Respectfully submitted,

J. T. Canales — His Attorney.



General J. N. Cortina and his wife, taken in Atzacapotzalco, near Mexico City, about 1891, and is the last picture of Cortina. He died of natural death, without ever being wounded.



The above is a picture of Juan N. Cortina in civilian clothes while he was managing his Mother's ranch at Santa Rita, which is in the possession of relatives living in Brownsville.